



Community Meeting Regarding the Proposal to Co-locate Hirsch High School and Art In Motion Charter School

January 9, 2018

Hirsch High School, 7740 S. Ingleside

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

CPS Staff in Attendance:

Karen Saffold, Mary Bradley, Chasda Martin, Laura Farr, Pat (Communications)

CPS Presentation:

Karen Saffold opened the meeting and provided the introduction to other CPS staff and basic logistics of the meeting. Karen indicated that she and Mary were here on behalf of Acting CEO Janice Jackson. She also indicated that this was an opportunity for Dr. Jackson hear the community input on the proposal. Attendees were encouraged to sign up to speak, and those that who did not wish to speak in this setting, but still had questions to submit those questions from transitions@cps.edu. The presentation was transitioned to Mary Bradley.

Mary Bradley provided an overview of the approved Art In Motion Charter School proposal, community efforts to date and what potential benefits of co-location could be. Mary transitioned the presentation over to Karen.

Karen reviewed the logistics of public participation, including allowing elected officials to speak and then logistics for public participation.

She recognized that Mr. Michael Brunson and Larry Varn, Principal of Hirsch were present at the meeting.

Michael Brunson: One of the elected CTU officials. Mr. Brunson acknowledged that he spoke at the Board meeting on 12/6/17 and brought up a number of issues. He indicated that this proposal may be viewed through the lens of celebrity, understanding that there is a rapper and popular minister behind it. He also indicated that the money should be followed because it all flows to the top. Mr. Brunson specifically mentioned Distinctive Schools and called out their connection to two individuals connected with SUPES. Specifically, he highlighted that as a charter school, the educators would not make as much money until they were unionized and that all of the money would go to the top, that is Distinctive Schools. He indicated that he raised these issues during the 12/6/17 Board Meeting related to Joseph Wise and David Sunstrom. Mr. Brunson

continued to highlight his acknowledgement of scandals: 2009 (selective enrollment) and 2015 (CPS CEO sent to prison). He informed attendees that they should be looking at connections such as Joseph Wise's recommendation that Barbara Byrd Bennet come to work for CPS. He stated that he gave a lot of facts at the board meeting and that only 2-3 hours later the Board adopted the proposal. Mr. Brunson indicated a few weeks prior the CTU delivered a letter to the Mayor of Chicago and Inspector General of CPS detailing the concerns of the individuals that are involved in Distinctive Schools. He indicated that he believed no one was considering these factors and that he would continue to pursue the matter because his family attends CPS. He asked CPS to slow down and take a closer look at the organizations that want to take over these schools. He'd like a closer look at Distinctive Schools and indicated that he filed an information request with CPS, Inspector General and State of IL. He followed up to indicate that he was actually demanding that CPS do deliberation on this matter before it goes any further. He does not believe this organization should take over Hirsch High School.

Karen Saffold recognized elected official Mattie Hunter Illinois State Senator

Illinois State Senator Mattie Hunter: State Senator Hunter indicated that this was a difficult meeting for her because she had not really spoken with the LSC but they did connect with her to ensure that she attended the meeting. She indicated that there are issues in her district related to school closures, as her district includes of the schools where major changes are occurring. She stated no one from CPS contacted her to discuss the changes. Many representatives of the community believe she was aware of the changes, attended meetings and was a part of the decision making process, but she indicated that was not true. She stated that CPS has not reached out to her or other elected officials from the general assembly to inform them of the proposals. Her entire district is in the city of Chicago and she supports and votes for resources being brought to CPS, she believes teachers and students need resources. She stated the difficulty in supporting CPS because they did not come to her office and discuss with her the proposed changes. She acknowledged that this was not appreciated because she works hard for her constituents. She also acknowledged a scheduled meeting with Janice Jackson and Frank Clark in the coming week to address these issues. She stated the need for a new school in Englewood and here, and she stated she is not opposed to building a new school, but that it should be discussed with her. State Senator Hunter introduced candidate for Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton. State Senator Hunter expressed her desire with selective enrollment students and have those resources available to this school. She reiterated that she has not yet spoken to anyone on this proposal and that she is here to listen. She indicated that there would be more meetings on the matter.

State Rep Juliana Stratton: Representative Stratton introduced herself and indicated that she is a firm believer of restorative justice. She stated that she is present here today to listen, understand and work in partnership, as she believes that she cannot make informed decisions until hearing from those that have been impacted. She

indicated that she will only be present for 30 minutes due to a similar meeting in Bronzeville but that her office is open and available should there be questions or concerns.

Principal Larry Varn: The principal introduced himself as the proud principal of Hirsh High School. He recognized that for many the school is a home and that he takes pride in being a part of it. He indicated that if Hirsch be a co-located school that there be equality and that he was speaking to inform the community of what he thinks. He indicated that he believes every child deserves a quality education and that Hirsch has lacked that equality. Principal Varn indicated that in 2015 Hirsch was the lowest performing HS in CPS. During his first year as principal the one year drop out rate cut in half. Freshman On Track rate increased by 31%, college persistence increased by 11.4%, 2nd largest citywide. The principal recognized the difficulty of making these results including that the My Voice My School survey went from the lowest to the highest ratings. Hirsch moved from 1.2 from a 1.9 (1/10 a point away from making Level 2). The detailed that Hirsch is here and ready to be heard. They have increased from a Level 3 to Level 2, although they are not where they want to be they are better than they used to be and they need CPS support. He acknowledged Art In Motion, Distinctive, the Lynn Group and New Life all doing their part and asked what CPS will do to provide better opportunities for the Hirsch students. He stated that there have been many instances where CPS co-locations have not been successful and that for this to be successful, things need to be done differently to get different results to not end up like other co-locations such as: Butler/Corliss, Baker/Bowen and TEAM/UP Englewood. He stated that Hirsch is doing what it can with what we have and that they are asking for more to do more. He stated his plea to CPS is that you restore, invest and rebrand and ask that this be the opportunity to make Hirsch great again. The Principal highlighted the proposed First Responders Academy, where the school can prepare students to be police, fire fighters, first responders and 911 operators, stating that this program will allow its children to be protectors of its community. He asked if there is going to be two schools that the two schools have an opportunity to thrive.

Karen Saffold proceeded to call speakers from the sign-in sheets.

1. **Carol Hayes:** Ms. Hayes introduced herself as a retired CPS social worker. She indicated that Mr. Brunson spoke about many of the themes identified for this evening. She indicated that the Chicago Board of Education and the Mayor be announced as guilty and asked the audience to look into Distinctive Schools. She stated that Joyce Cooper was a removed principal from CPS that now works for Distinctive Schools as an executive. She recognized Hirsch's declining enrollment and that programs have been taken away. She stated that this was not an accident, CPS CPS has pursued a strategy to disinvest in CPS schools and gives more funding to charters. She stated that Hirsch and the community have lost enrollment but for profit charters has gained enrollment. After speaking she proceeded to hand out materials.

2. **David Benefield:** Mr. Benefield is a community resident and employee and spoke in favor of Art In Motion (AIM). He stated that AIM provides exposure and opportunity for our young people. He has seen the community change and stressed the need for understanding support. He acknowledged and welcomed criticism but believes that they should remain opportunistic and do what's best for our children.
3. **A.R.:** Senior at Hirsch. The student introduced herself and highlighted her school involvement. She stated that she has concerns of what is going on here, especially with the proposed enrollment of the new charter. She recognized growth and support at this school and that the community comes together to make it what it is. She acknowledged her good work at Hirsch and that her desire is to get help for Hirsch students so that they can perform as successfully as her.
4. **Dr. Karen Ratliff:** Dr. Ratliff introduced herself as a member of New Life, one of the main partners for AIM and a resident of the Grand Crossing community. She spoke on the assistance and support that New Life has provided the Grand Crossing Community over the last seven years including investment in Hirsch. She stated that the goal is to co-locate Hirsch and that resources will be brought to both the AIM and Hirsch students.
5. **Jamaica Miller:** The Chairman recognized that she is familiar with the work of New Life but that there was not support for Principal Varn and the school. She stated that New Life investment in Hirsch was to rent space and that although computers were provided to Hirsch, many were not usable. She also stated that no meetings were held prior to the co-location announcement.
6. **Scott Frauenheim, President of Distinctive Schools:** He stated his desire to be open and transparent about the work ahead and also stated that Joyce Cooper has never been an employee. He highlighted the focus and important work is about the students, equity and access. He proceeded to highlight educational services (personalized learning, arts programming) that should be provided to all students. He reiterated that it is about the students, that they are excited about Hirsch's vision and for providing quality and choice to students.
7. **Mary Long:** Introduced herself as a restorative justice facilitator, career building and college prep and resume. She stated that is for supporting students at Hirsch and recognized that most speakers are discussing the building. She recognized her concern over improving and segregating a school that is in the same community, when it is the students who need the investment.
8. **Ms. Filbare:** Introduced herself as AIM board member and spoke to the message of Mary Long. She stated that all students within the building are assets and that they've looked into student wellness measures to impact all students. She highlighted the importance of the community, including sharing resources and being thought partners in making decisions.
9. **David Robbins:** Introduced himself as a CTU member against the co-location of Hirsch. He stated decreases in investment at Hirsch and that students deserve resources like suburban schools. He recognized the need for high quality public

schools and that they should be given the resources they need. He asked CPs to support Hirsch.

10. **Adrienne Leonard:** Introduced herself as a student advocate for Distinctive Schools by choice. She asked the audience what they have done to help and support Hirsch. She stated that although she is employed by Distinctive, they have allowed her to support the Hirsch principal and community with community engagement and service efforts. She acknowledged her involvement in the co-location at Calumet High School reiterated the need of the community to take ownership.
11. **Julius Stanley:** Introduced herself as a community member and stated that she was both for and against Art In Motion. She recognized Art in Motion as positive and recognized the need to have community members on the Board of Distinctive Schools and Art In Motion.
12. **Speaker:** Member of AFT. He stated that is a mistake to open a charter and sited school governance as a problem, including various school boards, not having a Local School Council, and teacher discipline.
13. **Ronald Jackson:** He stated that the community has gotten comfortable with being told what they need and now the school is going to close.
14. **A.B.:** Junior at Hirsch HS. She is not in favor of the co-location and indicated that they will be kicked out if the school co-locates.
15. **Curtis** (See transcript for last name): He stated he is a teacher and worked for CPS, including the new Miles Davis and Thorp. He acknowledge the hard work on the Network Chief and Principal and acknowledged the State Senator as well. He expressed his disappointment with them not being told anything, and now they are being asked to co-locate. He shared his view of co-location as a way of pushing people out of the system.
16. **Red Daley:** He stated he is a social worker and attended Hirsch as a Freshman. He stated his concerns over mayoral control of CPS and how it is politicized the public schools. He indicated his desire to organize the community to fight against the charter issue and the reconstitution of Hirsch. All registered speakers spoke and the attendees were given the opportunity to re-register to speak if so desired.
17. **Carol Hayes:** Followed up to her earlier comment and reiterated that co-location would be negative for Hirsch as it will close in two years. She indicated that Hirsch would be replaced by a new charter school and students will not be able to find other schools to attend.
18. **Michael Brunson:** Followed up on his comment earlier in the meeting and stated that co-location is segregation. He questioned the impact on Hirsch once Art In Motion reaches it at capacity enrollment and that charter schools do not have LSCs. He also expressed his concern for lack of teacher voice, until a charter school is unionized.
19. **Ms. Filbare:** Followed up in response to previous comments to highlight the importance of not focusing on “fear based thinking” as it was not getting the conversation anywhere.

20. **Speaker:** Talked about the responsibility he placed on himself and his children to take responsibility for their education, including asking for a syllabus from all of their teachers in elementary school. He indicated his support for the charter school.
21. **Red Daley:** Spoke about the system of public education and its budget. Included how the system that is not serving the interests of the black community. He drew a connection to being politically connected and getting a charter school in Chicago. He also drew a connection to low performing schools and charters identified as the solution. He highlighted the importance of organizing to fight for this not to happen in the community.
22. **Jennifer:** Jennifer introduced herself as a member of Distinctive Schools. She was a teacher and made the intentional move to a charter school because she wants to positively impact students education. She is in support of the co-location and looks forward to working with the community to make positive change and contributions together.
23. **Tamari:** He introduced himself as a minister at New Life and servant of Greater Grand Crossing. He talked about his support for the arts, for the high school and for the students of Hirsch. He mentioned his work with 10 students at Hirsch on an art piece and that the co-location is a good change because resources will be coming to the community.
24. **Deb Hass:** She provided her perspective in participating on the Southeast NAC several years ago. They reviewed new school proposals and she spoke of the issues with that process and the charter proposal issues that were highlighted at that time. She did not believe there was support to demonstrate that Distinctive will do well with arts education and expressed her concern with New Life's support of the LGBTQ community.
25. **April Shaw:** She introduced herself as an educator and stated her believe that the community is all fighting to do what's right for children. She asked the community to look at the research and "work together to make a broader impact on our students and our families".
26. **Ronald Banks:** In response to previous comments, Mr. Banks asked if the community can reason together and proceeded to give an example of how a family member improved their school performance because of the conversation they had with each other about the importance of his education.
27. **Mobolaji Akintunde:** Mr. Akintunde asked the community about how the perception of fear can be changed and that the community can look at the resources that might be available to them. He asked the community to ask questions and to be curious and have an open mind as to the possibilities of this partnership.